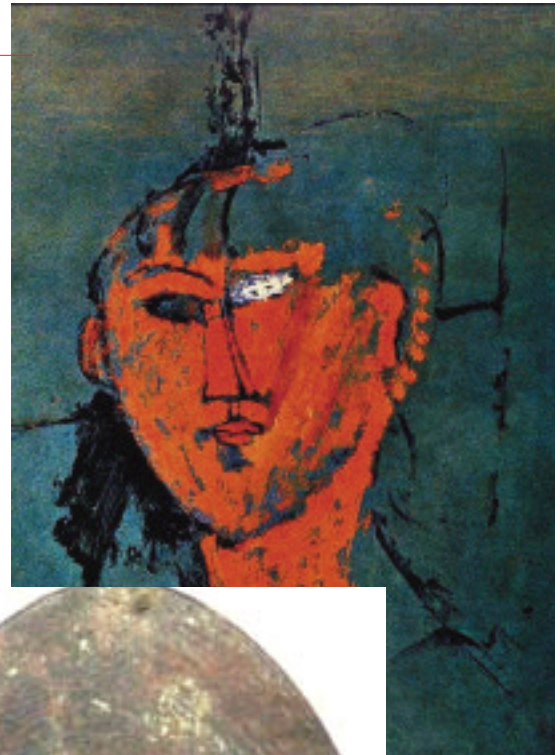


Feeling real

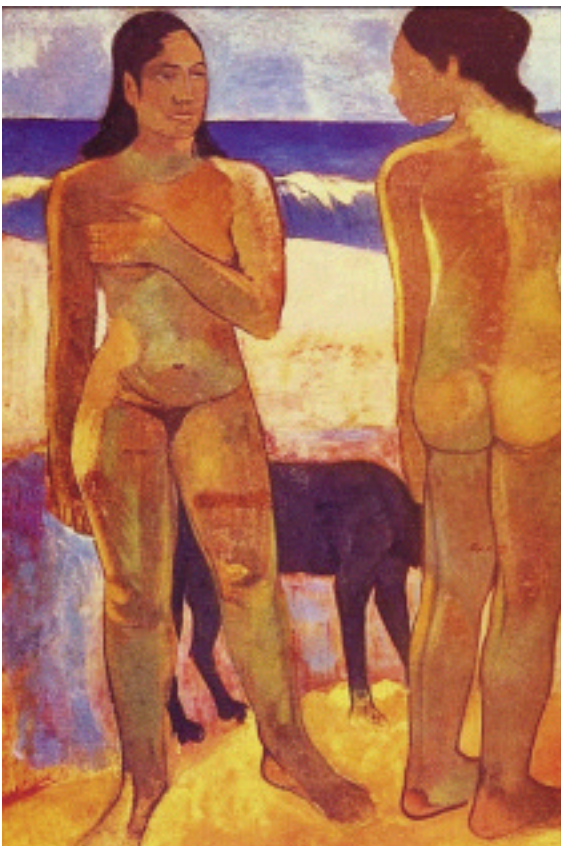
Creating convincing realistic paintings requires a lot of practice and skill, but in one way it's easy: you have only to stick to the rules and perform the tricks to produce an acceptable image. And, of course, you have your subject matter (or on a photograph of it) in front of you as an immediate reference.

Abstraction requires another kind of skill: you have to simplify and edit; you have to reduce your subject to its essence. And creating abstract or more symbolic forms has its advantages. An abstracted image suggests to the viewer how the artist felt—what he thought was important or characteristic. Unhindered by the rules of visual accuracy, an artist can exaggerate colors or size or shape. He can make things round or flat; he can make the pictorial space of his work deep or shallow. He doesn't have to worry about making things look real.

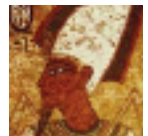
Examine the three works on this page—the Modigliani, the Gauguin, and the African sculpture. The artists who made these works have not attempted to fool the viewer's eye with illusionistic tricks. The objects they depict don't look real, the expressive message of their work is clear. Realistic paintings can be expressive—think of Wyeth or Rembrandt or Vermeer—but just making objects that look real isn't enough. To be a work of art, a painting doesn't necessarily have to look real; it has to feel real. And it has to express real feelings. ■



Amadeo Modigliani (1884-1920)



Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)



Symbolic



Realistic



Abstracted